



Arlington Zoning Board of Appeals

Date: Tuesday, January 26, 2021

Time: 7:30 AM

Location:

Additional Details:

Agenda Items

Administrative Items

1. **Remote Participation Details**

In accordance with the Governor's Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G. L. c. 30A, § 20 relating to the COVID-19 emergency, the Arlington Zoning Board of Appeals meetings shall be physically closed to the public to avoid group congregation until further notice. The meeting shall instead be held virtually using Zoom.

Please read Governor Baker's Executive Order Suspending Certain Provision of Open Meeting Law for more information regarding virtual public hearings and meetings: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/open-meeting-law-order-march-12-2020/download>

2. **Members Vote: Approval of Meeting Minutes from January 12, 2021**

Comprehensive Permits

3. **Thorndike Place - New Correspondence Received**

Meeting Adjourn



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Remote Participation Details

Summary:

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Town of Arlington, Massachusetts

Thorndike Place - New Correspondence Received

ATTACHMENTS:

Type	File Name	Description
▢ Reference Material	A_Dedekian_1-15-21.pdf	A Dedekian 1-15-21
▢ Reference Material	B_Battuello_1-15-21.pdf	B Battuello 1-15-21
▢ Reference Material	B_Willis_1-13-21.pdf	B Willis 1-13-21
▢ Reference Material	G_McCormick_1-13-21.pdf	G McCormick 1-13-21
▢ Reference Material	K_Petho-Read__1-13-21.pdf	K Petho-Read 1-13-21
▢ Reference Material	M_McCabe_1-13-21.pdf	M McCabe 1-13-21
▢ Reference Material	Patricia_Browne_1-13-21.pdf	Patricia Browne 1-13-21

Dear Committee Members: I'm a resident of 88 Brooks Ave, Arlington, MA 02474. I do wish to go on the record to voice my very strong objections to the Mugar construction project. My two concerns are the damage it will do to the wetlands and to the traffic on Lake St. and all the streets off Lake Street between Rte 2 and Mass Ave. The worst choke point will be the new traffic lights at the Minuteman bike path and the intersection of Lake St. and Brooks Ave... I'm aware that traffic is light now on Lake Street and pretty much across the State due to Covid-19. But once life returns to normal, the traffic congestion and bottlenecks on Lake Street will return. And if we allow the Mugar construction to happen, the cars that this complex will add to Lake St. will be horrendous. I strongly urge the Committee to vote against the Mugar Wetlands construction project. Thank you.

Armen Dedekian

88 Brooks Avenue, Arlington, MA 02474

Our family is fortunate to live in the Kelwyn Manor area across Lake Street from the neighborhood affected by the proposed development. Until the recent reduction of traffic caused by Covid-19, it was well known that Lake Street was essentially unusable from 4:30pm until 6ish weekday evenings. As I'm sure you know, traffic backed up into Belmont and onto the ramps from Route 2.

Once things return to "normal" the traffic will return. There are no alternate routes into the proposed development, and the situation will be even worse than before. In prior times, you could occasionally get a kind soul to wave you out onto Lake Street, where you would patiently wait as the traffic crept up to Mass Ave. If we add significant additional residents, it is less likely that someone that has waited a long time to get off Route 2 and is almost home will be so considerate.

While our area grew naturally into single family homes and duplexes, there was never any planning for major infill beyond our existing infrastructure. I urge you to consider the existing situation before adding substantial extra traffic.

Thank you very much for your consideration and for volunteering for this important function.

Brian Battuello
22 Spy Pond Parkway
Arlington

I am a resident at 65 Dorothy Rd. My commute takes me from southbound route 2 to Lake street to Burch Street. Before March 2020, it would often take me 20 minutes to from the time I exit Route 2 until I turn onto Burch street because of the large amount of traffic going through Lake street. The difficulty of getting onto Lake street from Route 2 would occasionally cause traffic to backup onto Route 2 itself.

The current infrastructure does not support the additional cars that would come along with Thorndike Place. We should be trying to fix this problem, not making it worse.

Thanks,
Ben Willis

Cars along Lake Street use Hamilton Rd as a short cut even though that's not legal. The Spy Pond Condo complex has spent an enormous amount of money paving and repaving our road as a result of this, and children and elderly living here are endangered by drivers passing through at high speeds. So additional traffic coming from new development is a terrible idea.

On top of that we can expect more flooding as a result of climate change and that will make driving along Lake Street even more problematic than it already is.

Gail McCormick
30 Hamilton Rd

Good morning,

I wanted to provide input for the traffic discussion. While traffic is overall way down due to the COVID 19 pandemic, I have noticed it picking up lately and have seen more traffic on Lake street.

But during normal times traffic on Lake street is intense. My kids attend Hardy school and there is significant traffic in the morning heading towards Route 2. It backs up past the school and the light at Hardy and Brooks is very busy.

In the evening starting around 3pm traffic on Lake street barely moves from Route 2 (or further back), and is incredibly slow all the way to Mass Ave. It takes forever to travel this short distance.

Any increase in traffic would make this already difficult situation worse. This is a major concern due to the number of housing units and parking associated with the development of the Mugar property.

Thank you,
Karen Petho-Read

Zoning Board,

Any traffic study performed during the Pandemic is like measuring the amount of snowfall in July . It will not be a true representation of the amount of vehicles that normally use Lake Street, especially, during working hours, when companies and other places of business are back in working condition.

I do not have access to attend the meeting on zoom. I would appreciate the reading of this email. It doesn't take a traffic engineer to realize that this is not a time that will be a true result of what the amount of vehicles use Lake Street.

Thank you,

Mark W. McCabe
4 Dorothy Road
Arlington, MA 02474

Hello

I live on Mary St and my biggest concern around Thorndike Place is traffic. I am 100% for building more housing in Arlington. But I have a question that no one seems to be asking.

Can this be built with a total allotment of about 100 parking spaces for the apartment buildings?

The developer keeps talking about “car-free, public-transit-oriented” housing. How about really going all-in on the “transit-lifestyle”? Let everyone live the car-free lifestyle that the developer is selling...

Why allocate 1.4 parking spaces per unit? How about creating units that, by lease or by sale, simply do not come with parking? This is not out of character with Somerville, Cambridge, or Boston – other towns with “transit-oriented” housing. How about Arlington embracing this trend? Can we think beyond a car-centric development?

Here is what I am proposing:

- 75-80 spaces for people with needs (disability, health, age, family) The parking spaces could only be allocated strictly by demonstrated, documented need. Since it is a new development, this should be easy to implement from the beginning. People would know upfront the conditions for getting a parking space. Anyone whose needs change can be put on a waitlist or can choose to move. Anyone who is moving in going forward would know if parking is or is not available for them. Parking would not be by-right but by allocation by management. Draw up a specific set of criteria for applying for a parking space.
- 10 “admin-flex” spaces for current residents that could be emergency use for people with genuine immediate needs who are on the waitlist or have temporary needs. Unused spaces could be day-use for visitors.
- 3-5 Zipcar spaces for shared-use vehicles. Right outside the door. For the person who needs a car only occasionally, this might be an attractive solution. Perhaps a discounted Zipcar membership could be a perk for renters or owners. Since much of the “use study” by the developer includes rarely-used cars, this is something to consider.
- 10-15 Visitor spaces where overnight parking is not allowed except by prior approval by apartment complex management. They will need to agree to enforce this so that these spaces don’t turn into defacto resident parking. Apartment residents that don’t have parking spots at Thorndike will not be able to park on the streets instead. Because Arlington does not allow overnight, on-street parking, this should be easy to enforce.
- Covered, secure bike parking. If you’re going car-free, having a secure, safe, clean, well-lit, attractive, covered spot to store and access your bike would encourage this. You could store

dozens of bikes in the same amount of space as 3-4 cars. And how about adding chargers for electric bikes or scooters? There must be a pay-per-use solution for this growing trend. Maybe even a solar solution so charging could be free.

- Separate issue around cars: are there plans to install electric vehicle chargers on some of the spaces? Perhaps some of the visitor spaces could be allocated for this to encourage a charge-it and move-it system.

And in a win for the environment and flood-control, this would leave about 2/3 of the previously-planned paved area as open land and could be used as buffer and containment.

I really struggle with having this additional density in our neighborhood. And I am concerned that the developer has to do an exceptional job at buffering rain water to prevent flooding and providing an attractive transition into the complex from the neighborhood. But I think we need more housing in Arlington.

Here are my specific concerns around traffic and why I am proposing an alternative:

The streets in our neighborhood are narrow. When cars are parked on both sides of the street – which is often – it is very difficult for cars to get through. I can only imagine that a large vehicle like a fire truck might be forced to back up and turn around and find another way in case of an emergency.

We have many, many cars that drive over from other parts of Arlington and Cambridge and Belmont who park near Magnolia Field so they don't have to pay for parking or endure the traffic mess that is Alewife. And guess where they park? Right out in front of where Thorndike Place is proposed.

The current traffic on Lake Street is in no way comparable to before the COVID shutdown. Before COVID, from about 3:30-6:30, traffic is backed up behind the traffic signals at Route 2 all the way to Mass Ave. While I hope that the new crossing signal for the bike path will help with the throughput, the volume will return. Any current traffic study is in no way related to pre-COVID reality. You could roller skate down Lake Street at most hours of the day right now and not hit much traffic.

The two access roads that would handle all the traffic are as narrow as any of the other roads – and there is nowhere to expand these roads except right up to resident's front doors. I can't imagine adding another 300+ cars to our already dense neighborhood.

Thank you for reading and considering my very long email.

Patricia Browne
49 Mary St.